

Meeting of the Heating Advisory Committee on November 15, 2007

Members present: Kevin Bayley, Alan Davis, Steve Dumais, Rob Farley, Bob Garside, Ken Henrick, Al Little, Bob Lundergan, Kevin Pratt, Lyndon Rickards, Ken Taylor, Bob Wilkins

Interested members of the community present: Bruce Buttrick, Tedd Evans, Jim Fusco, Randal S. Ripley, Dianne Swain

Jeffery Cyr, the Mechanical Inspector at the Fire Marshal's Office was introduced. He briefly discussed his background. Inspector Cyr noted that he and his staff were verifying information submitted by technicians to insure the integrity of the licensing process.

Proposed changes to Amelia's Law (RSA 153:27-37) were discussed.

1 Add a corporate license to the RSA 153. Without a corporate license the individual technician's name would be on a permit and thus the individual technician would have all of the liability and not the company.

The discussion centered around this change requiring an officer of a company to hold the appropriate gas technician license(s) and then the company would get a corporate license. The company would need this corporate license to employee licensed technicians. It was also mentioned that the Fire Marshal's Office was working on this change. The committee decided to hold the discussion until the members saw the proposed change.

2 Change RSA 153:27 sections V, VI, VIII, and IX. Existing "second stage regulator or residential and non-residential heating equipment systems or water heating system using.." to "second stage regulator or residential and non-residential gas appliances and any other gas utilization equipment using...". This would make the law the same as the rules in section 8001.02 a 1 & 2.

The committee voted to recommend this change to the Fire Marshal.

3 RSA 153:29. Limit licensing to the scope of NFPA 54. Make sure the rules are not applied to vehicles (powered by natural gas or LP), R V's, boats, etc.

After a brief discussion, in which Tedd Evans suggested that Definitions Section (RSA 153:27) might be the appropriate place to limit the scope of the law. It was decided to refer this to the Fire Marshal's Office to decide how to limit the scope to that found in NFPA 54.

4 RSA 153:29 II b-c-d-e Combine from 4 licenses to 2 licenses. One license for installation (both natural gas and propane) and the other license for service (both natural gas and propane). This would be less confusing. Plus the only significant differences between natural gas and propane are the operating pressures and the orifice sizes.

The led to a long and free ranging discussion that can be summarized as follows:

The core issue is how to insure that those technicians who only took the standard CETP course (either in New Hampshire or elsewhere in the country) would know how natural gas is different from propane. This would include the important areas of physical properties (it rises when it leaks, its Btu content, etc), how it affects pressures, orifice sizing, pipe sizing, etc.

Pro: 1 Devise a special program to provide the natural gas knowledge.
2 Require the natural gas knowledge of all who want the combined license and thus force CETP to change.
3 Propane technicians already convert appliances from natural gas (they are manufactured as natural gas units) to use propane.
4 Piping license is for both fuels.

Con: 1 A technician who has successfully completed the standard CETP course would have to retake the whole course to get the Maine (natural gas) Supplement.
2 CETP is a national program that is constantly being updated by the National Propane Gas Association. They would not require technicians to study natural gas.
3 It is not a heavy burden for the Fire Marshal's Office to maintain a separation of the fuels in the installation and service licenses.
4 A propane company does not service or install natural gas appliances.
5 A HVAC company that services and installs appliances that use both fuels can get both licenses and use Granite State School, NATE or the Maine Supplemented CETP to train their technicians.

Outcome: The committee decided to recommend to the Fire Marshal to leave it as separate licenses for natural gas and propane for installation and service.

5 RSA 153:36 I. Prevent tenants from doing gas work. Second linestand alone structure owned or (change to and) occupied by the person

The committee decided it was dangerous for unqualified people to do gas work. Unlike electrical work where you would only burn your own house down or plumbing where you would only poison yourself, with gas you can cause a large explosion that will effect your neighbors as well as yourself. Therefore the committee recommended to the Fire Marshal that section RSA 153:36 Exceptions section I be struck from the law so that homeowners cannot do their own gas work. Note the provision that the homeowner's work should be inspected is not fulfilled in the 56 towns that do not have mechanical inspectors.

SB173 that regulates training schools was discussed. Tedd Evans mention that amendments had been added to the bill. They would exempt the required training for maintaining electrical, plumbing and gas licenses. However there is still a possible impact on training for the voluntary oil technicians' license and for manufacturers' and supply houses' training.

The committee decided to hold a discussion on the public comments on the rules from the public hearings until the next meeting.

A short discussion on publicizing the rules was held. The idea is to get the word to supply houses and building officials. To direct technicians to the Fire Marshal's Office website for the information.

Tedd Evans brought up the fact that only about a third of the plumbers are on line. He noted that there would be an upcoming meeting of those who hold the license renewal seminars and he would distribute brochures if they were provided.

Dianne Swain noted that licensing information is published in the NHPMC newsletter.

Inspector Cyr noted his staff is trained to answer telephone inquiries and he will be conducting small seminars on licensing.

The next topic of discussion was why a passing grade of 75% was required. How did it get into the rules? NATE and CETP have a passing grade of 70%. It was unfair for someone to meet national standards and have to pay to retake a test to meet this standard. The ensuing discussion included the suggestion of multiple sources of training but all applicants must pass the same test.

It was pointed out that this idea was worked on but couldn't implemented as the test supplier wanted to have exclusive rights to the test and the Fire Marshal's Office could not agree to that. It was also mentioned that the accepted training programs were either nationally accepted or met the national criteria.

The committee voted to recommend to the Fire Marshal that "with a score of at least 75%" be removed from the rules (section 8003.03).

The next meeting of the Heating Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, January 17, 2008 at 4:00 P.M..